

# Central Chilterns HS2 Community Forum

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David Lidington MP

Dear Mr Lidington,

## Concerns over Temple and Community Forum Noise Presentations

I attended the 26 September meeting of the adjacent Chalfonts and Amersham Community Forum where members heard a talk from the Temple Group's Acoustics, Noise and Vibration Technical Director Dani Fiumicelli. Temple is, of course, an environmental consultant to HS2 Ltd. Mr Fiumicelli, I understand, has presented many of the talks on noise that have been recently supplied to the 26 Community Forums up and down the HS2 route.

### **1. Temple's Noise Director: Inadequate Knowledge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

After the meeting had formally finished I had the opportunity to talk to Mr Fiumicelli. I found him helpful and approachable. However, I was very concerned to hear that he was under the misconception that HS2 would be solely in cutting in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where the route is not in tunnel. I was surprised to hear him say this and pointed out to him that HS2 is also on viaduct and embankment in the AONB. It was clear he did not realise this. He apparently did not know the following are in the AONB:

- a) The 500m long Wendover Dean viaduct (up to 17m high).
- b) The 500m long Wendover viaduct (up to 12m high).
- c) The 1km long embankment between these two viaducts (up to 10m high and with a mean height of 6.9m).

These structures, as you know, are planned in your constituency.

### **2. Why is this a Concern?**

As you probably know, HS2 Ltd says that the aerodynamic noise emitted from its trains including the pantographs, will largely be produced when the trains travel over 300kph.<sup>1</sup> Noise from the

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<sup>1</sup> HS2 Appraisal of Sustainability Appendix 5 Technical Reports page 40 paragraph 2.2.1  
<http://highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk/sites/highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk/files/hs2-aos-appendix05.pdf>

trains' pantographs could potentially be mitigated when HS2 is in deep cutting. However, it is hard to see how noise from the pantographs of trains travelling on viaducts, and on the 1km embankment referred to above between the viaducts, could be mitigated without erecting very tall bunds and barriers. Such bunds would have a vast land-take. Very tall barriers would need very substantial viaducts to support them. It is believed such arrangements would not be sustainable in terms of landscape. Accordingly, it does not appear that noise from the pantographs can be attenuated when HS2 is on viaducts and embankment.

The area where the viaducts and embankment are planned is not, as you know, at the periphery of the AONB. Rather it is where HS2 travelling north, is designed to descend from a high ridge into a valley which lies deep inside the AONB south of Wendover in your constituency. The area lies immediately to the north of the area covered by the Central Chilterns Community Forum and these structures will potentially impact on land covered by the Central Chilterns Forum. The forum believes that the regular passage of high speed trains on the viaducts and embankment will be noisy and intrusive in the AONB. As you know, this noise will occur potentially once every 100 seconds. In addition there will, of course, be the visual impacts of these tall structures in the AONB.

Apart from residents, this will impact on many public viewpoints overlooking the valley including rural roads used as cycle routes, footpaths, bridleways and long distance trails of national and regional importance. The area in question is also a significant historic landscape and contains several heritage assets as well as ancient routes. English Heritage makes it clear that noise is an integral part of heritage setting.<sup>2</sup>

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000 s82) states that AONBs are lands which have been designated as such for their outstanding natural beauty which includes relative tranquillity.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Government describes AONBs as national treasures in its 2011 Natural Environment White Paper.<sup>4</sup>

We understand Temple carried out the noise assessments for HS2 Ltd in the Appraisals of Sustainability that were issued for both the Consultation last year and in April this year when route options following transport corridors were appraised.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, it seems that the HS2 route through the AONB was designed whilst Temple's Technical Director of Acoustics was unaware that it was being planned to be on relatively tall viaducts and embanking in the AONB.

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<sup>2</sup> The Setting of Heritage Assets - English Heritage pages 5, 8, 16, 19 and 21 <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/setting-heritage-assets/>

<sup>3</sup> Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England Appendix 1 [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/B1DesignationGuidanceMar11\\_tcm6-26242.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/B1DesignationGuidanceMar11_tcm6-26242.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Natural Environment White Paper paragraph 4.35 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

<sup>5</sup> High Speed 2 Appraisal of Sustainability – Route Corridor and Design Speed Review <http://www.hs2.org.uk/assets/x/85354>

Why was this?

In addition to this being of concern to the Central Chilterns Community Forum, you will appreciate it is also an issue for the Dunsmore, Wendover and Halton Community Forum.

### **3. Who Should Have Delivered the Community Forum Noise Presentations?**

We understand Temple's role in preparing the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is to assess noise impacts that will occur during HS2's construction, whereas ARUP is to assess operational noise (i.e. while trains are actually running) for the EIA. Many people accept there will be noise impacts during construction, so that most questions are likely to be centred on operational noise. If this is the case, why did HS2 Ltd invite Temple to give the talks? Surely it is ARUP that should have delivered the noise talks to the forums? In addition, would not ARUP have been more aware of route design and thus of HS2's impacts on AONB land?

### **4. Poor Standard of Noise Presentation**

The Central Chilterns Community Forum would like to formally complain about the power point presentation "An Introduction to HS2 Ltd's Approach to Managing Noise" for Community Forums delivered by Mr Fiumicelli. This presentation was not projected onto a screen but was "talked through" from several sheets of paper stapled together and supplied to attendees. This made it difficult to follow as to which point was under discussion, particularly when the talk had to be delivered quickly due to time pressures. At the Central Chilterns Forum, Mr Fiumicelli's talk was gabbled/mostly unintelligible because the meeting was running out of time. Mr Fiumicelli was not responsible for the little time left for his presentation. However, if, as forum members have previously requested, HS2 Ltd issued briefing notes before presentations, the time available could have been more profitably spent on this subject.

I think you would agree that this is a very reasonable request. Why has HS2 Ltd apparently refused to do this? Such notes cannot do harm, they are likely to be beneficial and they would allow community forum time to be spent more productively. Surely issuing briefing notes before a meeting is an essential element of HS2's professed engagement process?

### **5. Misleading Noise Presentation**

The Central Chilterns Community Forum would also like to complain about the page entitled "UK Experience in Minimising Effects" of the above document "An Introduction to HS2 Ltd's Approach

to Managing Noise”.<sup>6</sup> This page gives the impression that affected communities should not be concerned about HS2’s noise impacts because there have been virtually no complaints about HS1 noise since the start of operation. This impression is misleading because the document fails to point out that:

- HS1 trains travel at 300kph maximum, not 360kph maximum as HS2 is planned to do.
- There will be up to 18 trains per hour each way on HS2. In Kent there are far fewer trains permitted to travel on HS1, even when the slower Javelin trains (225kph maximum) are included.<sup>7</sup>
- Many of those who found the noise created by HS1 unacceptable probably moved away.
- HS1 appears to travel either in tunnel or in an existing major transport corridor in Kent. This will not be the case for HS2 which is virtually a “virgin” route between the peripheries of London and Birmingham.

The effect of designing new transport infrastructure beside other noise sources is referred to in the Department for Transport’s own August 2012 WebTAG. This document points out that noise from another nearby source might “fill the gaps” in the noise emitted from a variable source and that this can have a masking effect.<sup>8</sup> This is the case for the variable noise source HS1, which – as noted earlier - is located near existing motorway noise sources.

In addition, the DfT’s WebTAG states that more research is needed to assess noise annoyance from high speed rail; this includes the effects of spectra, such as aerodynamic noise, and characteristics, such as sharp noise rises. Both of these are of particular concern in relation to HS2 due to its speed, train frequency and design as a “virgin” route. It was noticeable that Mr Fumicielli rapidly passed over this page and referred to it as “background information” at both meetings I attended.

The Forum expects the best global practice in noise abatement for the AONB. We continue to believe that the only effective form of mitigation is to extend the bored tunnel from Mantles Wood to the edge of the AONB north of Wendover. This would minimise noise as well as visual impacts and enable the continued public enjoyment of this readily accessible part of the AONB. In this context, as you know, the Chilterns is the only AONB between London and Birmingham.

We believe Mr Oakervee may find it instructive to attend some community forum meetings and that the Central Chilterns Community Forum would be a valuable venue.

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<sup>6</sup>An Introduction to HS2 Ltd’s Approach to Managing Noise Community Forums September 2012 page 18  
<http://www.51m.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/An%20introduction%20to%20HS2%20Ltd%27s%20approach%20to%20managing%20Noise.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>In Kent no more than 4 Eurostar and 3 domestic (225kph maximum) trains are permitted to travel on HS1 “in both directions together in any one hour”. HS1 Section 1Infrastructure Register page 12

<sup>8</sup> WebTAG Noise Sub-objective August 2012 paragraphs 1.4.7 and 1.7.4  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag/documents/archive/1208/unit3.3.2.pdf>

We would be grateful if you could make enquiries about our concerns.

In view of the public interest in this matter, we shall be distributing this letter widely.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Fletcher B.Sc. Ph.D.  
On behalf of the Central Chilterns Community Forum

cc.

Simon Burns MP Minister of State for Transport

Maria Eagle MP Shadow Secretary of State for Transport

Cheryl Gillan MP

Andrea Leadson MP

Peter Lilley MP

David Gauke MP

Dominic Grieve MP

Steve Baker MP

Mike Penning MP

John Howell MP

Steve Rodrick Chief Officer Chilterns Conservation Board

Douglas Oakervee, HS2 Ltd

Cllr Martin Tett Chair 51m

David Davies, Transport Specialist, Transport Select Committee